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Egremont Planning Board Minutes, Emily Innes and Associates Presentation

December 9, 2021, 11:36 AM

Call to order: 11:36

Present via Zoom:

Planning Board: Jared Kelly, Chair, Mary McGurn, Stephen Lyle, Matthew Bersani (joined at 12:00PM)

Citizens in Attendance: Lucinda Vermeulen, BOS, Peg McDonough, (Egremont administrator for ARPA), David Seligman, Chair of ConCom, Eileen Vining (by phone)

Innes Associates Ltd.

Emily Innes, Innes Associates Ltd.

Tracy Adamski, Tighe and Bond

PB Meeting prior to Presentation

Jared's outlined the questions he had for Emily Innes including mapping, workshops, the structure of the steering committee, budget, subsequent grants and their allocation, and timeline.

Mary McGurn had questions regarding the coordination of the Master and OSRP, engagement workshops, what the background of steering committee members should be, and conflict resolution.

Stephen Lyle noted that preservation was missing from the scope bullet points in the proposal, and if it would be possible to include the rough costs of specific actions as a matter of course, in the planning process.

Peg McDonough asked if it would be one committee for both plans, or otherwise.

Lucinda Vermeulen concurred with the preservation question, and as to what the relevant deliverable was.

Mary McGurn noted that the MA Master Plan handbook recommends an implementation committee.

The need for actionable recommendations, with timelines and accountability for implementation, was voiced by everyone.

Presentation

General introductions from Emily Innes and Tracy Adamski (both joined at minute 25, around noon).

Principal Emily Innes introduced herself as a land use and regulatory planner, as well as a comprehensive and strategic planner. She founded Innes Associates in 2020, after ten years with Cecil Group/Harriman Associates.

Tracy Adamski, of Tighe and Bond (she would be Ms. Innes' collaborator on the OSRP part of the project), introduced herself as an AICP planner with a focus on land use and environmental permitting. She has done multiple OSRP and recreation plans including South Hadley, where they also collaborated. Ms. Adamski has 20 years of experience at Tighe and Bond, which was established in 1911, and has 12 offices.

Ms. Adamski described typical OSRP scope: Conservation of open land, scenic vistas, parks, cultural and historic resources, and 2 types of recreation – passive e.g. trails, and active e.g. tennis courts. She enumerated Egremont's natural and built outdoor assets with some familiarity. She emphasized that an approved OSRP is necessary for Egremont to qualify for MA Dept. of Conservation grants, but that it will also serve for guiding and prioritizing town projects. She said an OSRP plan gets a lot of oversight from MA Dept of Conservation Services, with numerous points of compliance.

Ms. Innes described a new method of organizing a master plan that is gaining popularity, one that is more thematic in style, seeking to identify a given town overarching priorities through a narrower focus, thereby avoiding poor communication between working groups, redundancy and irrelevance. This approach synthesizes old and new issues into a set of clearly prioritized themes to bring concrete direction to the development of the Town of Egremont.

Ms. Innes described similar projects they have worked together on including Scituate, South Hadley and Medford, all in MA. Ms. Innes gave detailed examples of best practices they have utilized during the public engagement phase. These can be in person, online, or a combination.

Ms. Innes then queried the board as to their goals for the planning process, public engagement, and what they viewed as challenges and opportunities.

The board responded that these included realistically actionable items with implementation (including rough costs where possible), zoning maps, effective outreach to maximize public engagement and the consequent buy in to achieve the 2/3rds vote necessary to carry at town meeting.

Jared Kelly, Chair of PB, outlined the challenges of recent cost of living and real estate price increases, and the opportunities for development that Egremont presents. In particular, he mentioned the commercial revitalization of the South Village as an opportunity, a sentiment echoed by PB Member Matthew Bersani.

PB Member Mary McGurn explained the differences between the North and South Villages, underlining the outdoor recreational assets of North Egremont, especially French Park.

Lucinda Vermeulen, Citizen and BOS Member, spoke to the importance of the makeup of the steering committee in assuring plan implementation.

Peg McDonough, a planner and the Egremont ARPA Administrator, wanted to be sure the process included our younger citizens, and suggested scheduling an annual review of progress on the plan, as part of the plan.

David Seligman of ConCom, brought our attention to the overriding challenges posed by climate change - whether it be through invasives like ticks, or aging dams – as the leading focus, in his view.

Tracy Adamski, of Tighe and Bond, spoke to how OSRP and Master Plan issues can overlap and be addressed synergistically, as in the value relationship between the visual charm of the South Village, and its commercial development.

Emily agreed with Tracy, pointing out how opposing views can find common ground through pursuing a common goal, and that the Master Plan can serve as a guide for that process. She thought some rough projections of the financial impacts of action items to Egremont could be included in their work. She chaired the master plan creation of her town, and said they are actively using its implementation provisos. She said having a strong Executive Summary of the Master Plan online has made their Plan a far more accessible, and therefore utilized, living document – as opposed to a door stop.

Jared Kelly, Chair, asked whether a zoning map with an overlay of the South Village, with potential bylaws, would be a deliverable. Ms. Innes said it would.

Emily and Tracy left at 1PM

Future meeting availabilities for PB and others attendees for remaining consultant interviews were determined.

There was a consensus that the presentation had been strong.

Motion to adjourn 1:15.